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## The Decorator and Furnisher.

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### THE PRICE PRIZES.

THREE PRIZES—\$50, \$30 AND \$20.

NOTHING would appear to be more appropriate at the present time than a due attention to the adoption of a national flower and the development of a national style of architecture and ornament—both to indicate the great individuality of the American people, past, present and to come.

In the selection of a floral emblem, the trailing arbutus, the golden rod, the violet, the forget-me-not and the sun flower have adherents, and it is a pleasure to note the interest manifested.

But the wider field for the development of American individuality lies in the selection of a style in architecture and ornament, as for this immortal purpose we have a plant peculiarly American and peculiarly adapted for utilization.

It is, of course, maize or Indian corn which possesses unusual variety in its stalk, leaf, plume, silk, husk and ear, every part of which in form is intrinsically and essentially beautiful and capable of adoption extensively in both art and architecture. Nor does variety end in its form, its grace of line and its light suggestive movement, but it is most richly abounding in colors that refresh and cheer, the greens of summer and the gold of autumn, each in splendid variety and of astonishing delicacy. The fruit even affords still a field for expansion, both in general form and in detail, while the shaded white of the white ear, the tinted red of the red ear, and the shaded and tinted yellow of the yellow ear, all contribute to infinite variety and immense possibility in ornament.

Col. J. A. Price, of Scranton, Pa., has authorized us to offer three prizes amounting to \$100, and divided into a first prize of \$50, a second of \$30 and a third of \$20 for the best adaptation of maize in the industrial and architectural arts.

No limitations are imposed upon the designer as to material, and workers in the metals, stone, glass, wood, paper, textiles, etc., are all invited to compete.

Suggestions in architectural design need not embrace a whole building but merely some distinctive part to characterize the whole.

All designs, which must be in black and white, should be received at this office on or before December 5th, 1889, and bear a fictitious signature, accompanied by a sealed envelope having on the outside a similar signature, and enclosing the name and address of the designer.

The following gentlemen, who are eminently representative

## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

in different departments of industrial art, have consented to act as a committee of award:

HERBERT E. STREETER (J. F. & J. G. Low).  
E. SPENCER HALL (Herter Bros).  
ALFRED TRUMBLER (Art Critic).

THE interest that prevails on the subject of adopting a flower as a national emblem of the United States renders it apposite to glance at the preferences given by different nations in past times to certain flowers, plants and trees, ranking sometimes as accepted symbols, and which were largely applied by them in decorative forms. It is true that they generally used all the flowers about them suited to this purpose, but their favorite selections for decorative work are apparent. The Egyptians appear to have adored the palm tree, lotus and papyrus, adopting them as ornaments in patterns and borders, and singly in bunches for capitals of columns; the Greeks attached themselves to the honeysuckle and acanthus, not despising however for ornamentation of ceramic ware the vine, ivy, laurel, olive and convolvulus; the Jew admired the pomegranate and almond; the Assyrians, the pinesapple and lotus; the Græco-Roman, the acanthus; the Arab, some plant or flower with curling leaves; the Indian natives of the Indies, the mango; the Chinese, the peony. The western mediævalists in the thirteenth century employed in decoration some sort of conventionalized plant with deeply channelled stalks and leaves foliated into four or five divisions, with the end of each leaf raised into a blob as if it had been beaten from behind with a round-headed hammer, and subsequently they utilized every kind of plant, leaf and flower, but in the best times of mediæval art the bursting bud or open leaf was preferred. The Renaissance art took both the acanthus of the Græco-Roman and the fanciful and capricious decorations found in some of the Roman baths, and covered everything with ornament in which the acanthus curled and filled the spaces between cornucopias, animals, chimeras, cupids, and medallions. The fleur de lis of France, the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland, the shamrock of Ireland, were adopted by virtue of historic associations. It would be well if the flower selected as a national symbol should be such as could be so adapted to decorative purposes, conventionally and otherwise, as to supply new forms of beauty for mural and ceiling adornment, as well as for the painter's canvas and for the enrichment of architecture. Thus it would be fully incorporated as a national emblem, and by its use as such obtain additional attractiveness and dignity.

THE Paris Exhibition serves to illustrate the fact that in decorative art distinctive national features are being somewhat effaced; still, it may be assumed that certain characteristics will continue to cling to the productions of each nation, traceable to mental and temperamental differences as well as to traditional tendencies. The French primarily aim at grace; the English at simplicity and solidity; the inventive faculties of the former are stimulated by the tendency to idealize, aided by a warm imagination fruitful of suggestions; the latter are influenced by a matter of fact disposition, and aim at adaptation rather than show. This country may be regarded as eclectic in its tastes, as combining in art the most varied qualities, and less weighed down in decorative art than are foreign designers by classic reminiscences, being withal more practical in its endeavors. In metal work, as displayed at the Paris Exhibition, the French seem still to adhere to the heavy forms that prevailed under the Empire, whereas in all our domestic ironwork all the lightness compatible with the purpose of the several articles is secured, and this with the adoption of elegant styles of ornamentation. In the special industry of ceramic ware we allow the French to lead, for our manufacturers can neither command the skill, nor secure, under European competition, remuneration for the execution of the higher class of designs. It is in textile hangings and in artistic furniture as well as in ceramics that we find the most striking exemplification of French taste—a taste that instructs while it delights. Art in this day has every facility for diffusion, and there is little question that in the future this country will be found to excel in those productions of superior excellence which are now the special pride of some of the older nations.

THE unattractive, dull dead white of plaster casts in the form of statuettes, many of which are exquisite replicas of classic works commonly causes them frequently to be relegated to dark cupboards as unsuited to room ornament. Now, they may be made to look like polished marble by the simple process of brushing them over with skim milk, using a camel's hair pencil, the milk being applied until the cast will absorb no more. Another mode is to take about a quarter of an ounce

avoids of the finest white soap, grate it small and put it into a new glazed earthen vessel with a pint of water, holding it over a fire until the soap is dissolved and then adding the same quantity of white wax cut into small pieces. As soon as the whole is incorporated it is fit for use. The statuette, suspended by a thread, is to be dipped in this varnish and after a quarter of an hour the operation is to be repeated. Let it stand for a week. Then rub it gently with a piece of muslin wrapped around the finger; great care is necessary as the coating is thin. A brilliant gloss will thus be produced.

IN conventionalizing natural forms we adapt them to the capacity of the material and although there may be no direct representation, the tangential law must be recognized in the smaller details of foliage. A recognition of the law of leaf growth is absolutely necessary. If in representing the foliage of which is full, simple and graceful, parts are unduly distorted or omitted, or the angles at which the side lobes spring from the stem fancifully altered, the effect is hideous. A Tudor rose conventionalized is made grotesque if appearing as springing from no particular place, or if the petals instead of clustering round the center are decentralized. The main stems of all the dependent lobes in nature are connected in a clearly defined manner with the main stem of the parent leaf, and their connection must be. Frequently in carvings and decorative painting it is a perfect puzzle—the stems and lobes. In conventionalized designs based on foliage, for instance, there must be an apparent proportion of strength between the stems and the ornaments which they carry. A foliage design in which the stems should be thick and heavy and the conventional foliage springing from them small and light, would inevitably affect the eye with a disagreeable sense of the wrong proportion and *vice versa*. It only needs a recognition of the principle to trace its influence continually in discriminating the good or bad qualities of decorative design.

SO many ornamental articles may be made by ladies with paper, silk or leather as materials, that it will be serviceable to give the composition of a glue, to be made into small rolls, that on being slightly wet and rubbed along the edges of the parts will unite them as firmly as though there was no jointure. One ounce each of isinglass and parchment glue, with two drachms each of sugar candy and gum tragacanth are to be boiled in two ounces of water till of the consistence of glue.

THIS country makes the best school furniture in the world regarded from the point of constructional fitness. It appears from the last report of U. S. Consul Eckstein of Amsterdam, that we supply, on a considerable scale, school desks as well as theatre chairs to Holland.

JAPANESE rooms are lighted, not by glass windows, but by a kind of wooden gratings, over which a white paper is pasted on the outside. This paper diffuses the sunlight about the room very pleasantly, but it is not proof against rain; in rainy weather, therefore, the shutters have to be put up which are used to close the verandah and house in the night time, and which are the only doors in a Japanese house that is thought necessary to furnish with a bolt. As the putting up and taking down of these shutters is a matter demanding some time, it is usual to have a small door made in them, which is called "the earthquake door," to provide means of quick escape in case of emergency.

